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By Lark Reynolds

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## **Taylor's Elementary parents mull single-gender classes**

A diverse group of about 100 parents and teachers gathered at Taylor's Elementary School on Tuesday to learn about the school's plans to add single-gender classes next year.

"I'm excited about it, as long as the teachers are excited about it," said Kim Boger, whose 7-year-old daughter will be in second grade next year.

David Chadwell, the state Department of Education's director of single-gender initiatives, presented information on differences between how boys and girls learn. He said differences range from how each gender processes visual information to the position in which they are most alert.

"It could create a more comfortable environment for your child to learn within," Chadwell said. "It allows teachers to implement lessons in oftentimes a better way."

Principal Vaughan Overman said the school plans to add at least one single-gender class for each sex in each grade, second through fifth. Parents will be given the choice to opt their child out of the selection pool for the classes.

Dr. Leonard Sax, founder of the National Association for Single-Sex Public Education, said South Carolina is the only state in the nation with a full-time state position focused on single-gender education and leads the nation in the number of schools offering single-gender classrooms, with 94.

He said people often assume the benefits have to do with hormones in the classroom, but the learning differences are actually more important, and single-gender classrooms in elementary schools are even more beneficial than at the middle school level.

"The difference between 6-year-old girls and 6-year-old boys in terms of how they learn is actually much larger than the difference between 17-year-old girls and 17-year-old boys," Sax said.

Chadwell said the statewide emphasis in South Carolina helps facilitate the success of single-gender classes. Teachers can share with each other what's working and not working in single-sex classrooms.

"We seem to have all the support pieces in place," Chadwell said.

Overman said the parents in attendance Tuesday responded positively to the plans for next year.